

# 2015 Recreation Fee Changes at Indiana State Parks, Lakes and Forests



Indiana State Parks and other DNR properties have provided affordable values in outdoor recreation for nearly a century. It takes money to conserve and manage these places where memories are made naturally. To continue doing so in the manner Hoosiers deserve, the DNR will increase the fees for many features at these destinations, effective May 13, 2015.

**A visit to an Indiana State Park or State Forest remains a great bargain.** Campers find themselves wrapped in thousands of acres of forests, meadows, lakes, wetlands and prairies. A Hoosier family of four can spend an entire day in a park to picnic, bike, hike, swim, and enjoy nature exhibits and programs for \$7/car. Add in the cost of picnic supplies, and it is still cheaper than the cost of dinner or a movie. And no dinner or movie equals the value of sitting outdoors at a picnic table with trees, birds, bugs, and trails to discover.

**The fees collected will be reinvested in our state parks and state forests.** All fees go to dedicated accounts to fund staffing, supplies and equipment. Some fees will be used to supplement dollars appropriated by the legislature for facility maintenance and capital improvements. In Indiana State Parks alone, we manage more than 2,000 buildings, 700 miles of trails, 631 hotel/lodge rooms, 75 marinas, 16 swimming pools, 15 beaches, 8,400 campsites, 200 shelters, 160 playgrounds and 149 cabins. It takes staff and supplies to maintain these facilities. The last time we made this many rate changes at one time was in 2006.

**New or improved features increase the value of your park visit dollars spent each year.** These upgrades are done by our staff or with contracts. In 2015, visitors will see a new bike trail under construction at Raccoon SRA, new interpretive exhibits at Rose Island at Charlestown, upgrades to campground electrical service at Summit Lake and Turkey Run, horse campground improvements at O’Bannon Woods, restroom upgrades at Monroe, Hardy, Brookville and Spring Mill’s Pioneer Village, a new playground at Lincoln,

new cabins at Brown County and new camping cabins at Greene-Sullivan State Forest. More improvements are listed at [stateparks.IN.gov](http://stateparks.IN.gov).

**Indiana’s user-pay system has sustained our Indiana State Parks for nearly 100 years.** Approximately 70 percent of State Parks’ operating budget comes from user fees; only 30 percent comes from legislative appropriations. That translates to only \$1.39 in taxes per Hoosier each year to support state parks (and only 58 cents in taxes per Hoosier for state forests.)

**The fees to enter and use an Indiana State Park or State Forest are an investment in your quality of life, community, health and the future of Indiana.** DNR properties are economic drivers. A conservative estimate of the impact of State Parks visitors on local communities is approximately \$623 million, with a spending average of \$31.68 per visitor annually. More than 14,000 private sector jobs are created as a result. In this country, we spend 88 percent of our health care dollars on medical services and only 8 percent on things like prevention. DNR properties support healthy living through exercise and relaxation. Our 16 pools and more than 1,300 miles of trails provide great places to walk, run, bike and swim.

**Indiana State Parks and State Forests are places where memories are made naturally with families and friends.** Families grow up at our properties, then bring *their* families back to discover what’s new and introduce the next generation to their outdoor inheritance.

## Recreational Fees at a Glance\*

### Fees That Will Not Change in 2015

- Daily (\$2/person) and annual (\$10/person) pedestrian/bicycle pass
- Commercial buses (\$2/person) and onsite field trips fees(\$1/person)
- Daily horse tag (\$5/horse) and annual horse tag (\$20/horse)
- Non-motorized lake permit (\$5/permit)

- Daily swimming pool rates (\$3/person) except at Prophetstown and O’Bannon
- Rental picnic shelters (\$25-\$75) and recreation building rental fees
- State boat mooring fees and boat rental fees
- Family cabin rental fees

### Fees that Change in 2015

#### Entrance Permits – Changes Effective on May 13, 2015

- In-state daily entrance from \$5 to \$7. (\$8/Prophetstown)
- Out-of-state daily entrance from \$7 to \$9 (\$12/Indiana Dunes and \$10/Prophetstown)
- In-state Annual Pass from \$40 to \$50
- Out-of-state Annual Pass from \$60 to \$70
- Golden Hoosier Pass (age 65/over) from \$20 to \$25

#### Swimming and Boating – Changes Effective on May 13 2015

- Aquatic Center daily passes from \$3 to \$5 at Prophetstown and O’Bannon
- Motorized lake permit from \$22 to \$25

#### Camping and Cabins – Changes Effective on May 13, 2015

- Full hookup nightly rates from \$26 to \$30 Sun.-Wed., \$36 to \$40 on weekends, and \$40 to \$44 on holiday weekends
- Electric site nightly rates from \$19 to \$23 Sun.-Wed., \$26 to \$30 on weekends and \$29 to \$33 on holiday weekends
- Nonelectric nightly rates from \$12 to \$16 Sun.-Wed., \$15 to \$19 Thur.-Sat. and \$18 to \$22 on holiday weekends
- Primitive, backpacking/canoe campsites from \$10 to \$12/night
- Rent-a-camp cabin rates from \$35 to \$40 at Tippecanoe River, Mississinewa, Shakamak, Deam Lake, Starve Hollow, Greene-Sullivan
- State Park Inn rooms generally by \$2/night

#### Special Forestry-Related Fees - Changes Effective July 1, 2015

- State tree nursery seedling price from \$0.32/seedling to \$0.35
- Firewood cutting permit from \$3/load to \$10/load or 3 loads/\$25

#### Horse Camping and Fees – Changes Effective on May 13 2015

- Electric site nightly rates from \$22 to \$26 Sun.-Wed., \$29 to \$33 on weekends and \$32 to \$36 on holiday weekends
- Nonelectric site nightly rates from \$15 to \$19 Sun.-Wed., \$18 to \$22 on weekends and \$21 to \$25 on holiday weekends
- Similar \$4/night increase for Deam Lake horse stall campsites

#### Fee Changes Pending Natural Resources Commission Approval

- Timber buyers’ licensing fee from \$125 to \$150 in 2017
- Timber buyers agent fee from \$10 to \$15 in 2017 and phased to \$25 over 2-3 years
- Establish state forest gun range fees (\$5/daily, \$25 - \$50/annual)
- New Classified Forest management assistance/plan fee of \$0.50-\$10/acre assessed every 5 years
- State forest self-registration campsites from \$10 to \$12.15/night (\$13 after tax beginning June 1, 2015)
- State forest self-registration horse sites from \$13 to \$14.95/night (\$16 after tax beginning June 1, 2015)
- State park primitive horse sites from \$13 to \$15/night
- New off-road cycling permit fee of \$5/daily or \$20/annual
- Annual statewide commercial photography permit of \$100 (includes gate fee)
- Addition of \$5/reservation fee for camping (NOT per night)
- Additional State Forest gate and use area fees implemented for 2016

#### Premium Site Fees – Changes Effective on Nov. 1, 2015

- Establish premium campsites (for example, sites directly by lakeshores) at an additional \$2/night

\*For a complete list of recreation fees visit [www.stateparks.IN.gov](http://www.stateparks.IN.gov)

# Questions and Answers About DNR Recreation Fee Changes

**Why are you changing fees in 2015?**

A “user pays” system has been in place since the inception of our State Parks in 1916. About 70 percent of our operating budget is covered by user fees. When costs of utilities, supplies and equipment increase for you at home, they increase for us too. We alter fees to maintain the services you expect and enjoy as a DNR property user. We have limited those fee changes since 2006 to reduce the impact on families during challenging economic conditions.

**Will entrance fees increase?** Yes, by \$2/car for both in-state and out-of-state visitors. You will be able to enter a State Park or a State Forest Recreation Area for \$7/day with an in-state vehicle license or \$9/day with an out-of-state license. There are many activities that have no additional fees. A few of these include visiting nature centers, hiking, birding, most interpretive programs, picnicking, biking and playground use. A day at a DNR property is an inexpensive way to enjoy your family and the outdoors.

**What about camping fees?** Most camping increases by \$4/night.

**Didn’t you just raise rates recently?** We have had minor increases in some fees, but our last across-the-board fee changes were in 2006. Prices rise gradually for the goods and services we purchase. The cost of providing facilities and services does the same. A first class stamp that cost 39 cents in 2006 is now 49 cents. A dozen eggs averaged \$1.31 in 2006; the same eggs now average \$2.11/dozen.

**My taxes support the DNR—why do I have to pay more for services?** Every tax dollar you pay is divided to support a wide variety of state services. A small percentage of each tax dollar is appropriated to the DNR. That equates to only about \$1.39 per Hoosier in taxes each year for State Park operations. The cost in tax dollars for statewide forestry conservation programs and operations is just 58 cents per Hoosier.

**Where does the money actually go when I pay for services?** All revenue from entrance fees, camping, programs and permits is placed in a dedicated account used only to fund the operations at State Parks or State Forests.

**Why doesn’t money collected from horse riders get used just on horse trails, or money from campers get used just on campgrounds?** No particular user group generates enough revenue to be self-supporting. There are also basic services that we provide at little or no cost to users, such as hiking, biking, many educational programs, security staff, and brochures and maps. Combining all types of user fees allows us to provide a wide range of services.

**What have you done with the dollars from past fee increases?**

Funds have been used to offset increases in utility, fuel and supply costs, and to purchase equipment. Funds are also used to manage new properties that bring Indiana’s resources closer to Hoosiers. Since 1988, the number of properties managed by Indiana State Parks has increased from 27 to 32. Operational dollars must stretch further. It is important to note, however, that our State Parks system has not increased staff. In fact, while the number of sites we manage has increased, the number of full-time staff in the division has dropped from 385 to 356. The average number of full-time staff/property has decreased from 14.2 in 1988 to 11 today.

**Will we see facility upgrades with these fee changes?** The majority of our funding for facility improvements does not come from user fees. These improvements are funded through legislative appropriations. However, some of these new dollars will be used for improvements, maintenance and staffing. These fee increases will help with projects that provide you with safe, secure and clean places to stay and play. You can see improvements for our properties summarized for the last few years at [stateparks.IN.gov/2441.htm](http://stateparks.IN.gov/2441.htm).

**How are new rates/fees determined?** We look at many factors, including the needs of our users, when fees were last raised, fees in other states and at private facilities, occupancy rates, our budget and the revenue needed to support staff and services.

**Why do some fees need approval by the Natural Resources Commission?** In 2005, the NRC approved a range of fees and authorized DNR to make appropriate fee adjustments within that range. We are still accountable to the NRC and must manage fee adjustments responsibly, but this allows us to vary rates within an approved range in most situations. Any new fees or fees outside the approved range need NRC approval.

**Are there any fee changes that must be considered by the NRC this year?** Yes. We will request a \$5/daily and \$20/annual off-road cycling permit. This mirrors fees charged for horses used on horse trails.

We are instituting a \$5 per reservation fee for using our Camping Reservation System. Most other states have been charging this fee for years. The funds will come to DNR, not our CRS vendor, and they will help cover our cost of operating the reservation system.

We are modifying a fee for commercial photographers who use our sites for photo shoots. This will now be a simple \$100 annual permit that can be used at all DNR properties and includes gate admission.

Some new State Forest fees will help cover costs and the value of goods and services provided. The popular gun range at Clark State Forest is a prime example. With the range’s more than 7,000 users annually, the new fee of \$5/visit or \$25 for an annual pass will help fund needed facility upgrades.

For \$10 a family can cut a rick of firewood (about a standard pick-up load) from designated areas on State Forests. The previous \$3 fee had not changed since the 1980s. This is a great value to Hoosiers who heat with wood and have limited access to firewood. A multi-load discount of 3 loads for \$25 is also available.

State Forest campgrounds are predominately ‘self registration’ primitive campsites. In response to visitor comments, the camping fees have been simplified and will be rounded to an even dollar amount.

There are also some changes in Classified Forest management assistance fees, fees for licensed timber buyers and tree seedling costs.

**When do the changes take effect?** Camping, gate admission, annual pass and swimming fee changes will take effect on May 13, 2015. Other fees will take effect on June 1, July 1 or Nov. 1, 2015, pending NRC approval.

**If I already made my camping or inn reservations for this summer, will I have to pay more?** No. All campground, inn and rent-a-camp or other lodging reservations made before May 13, 2015, will be honored at 2014 rates.

**Can I earn free passes or discounts to save on entrance or other costs?** Save by purchasing your annual pass or making your camping or inn reservations now - before May 13, 2015. SPRGo! Value Packs will remain at 2012 rates through August 2015, and are a great way to save on annual passes, boat permits or horse tags and camping. Visit [stateparks.IN.gov/7313.htm](http://stateparks.IN.gov/7313.htm) or [innsgifts.com](http://innsgifts.com).

We offer occasional contests with drawings for passes and gift cards, such as our annual fitness challenge, photography contests and other features offered by Indiana State Parks and by individual properties.

Starting in fall 2015, all 3rd-5th grade classrooms using a new Indiana State Parks history curriculum will receive a one-day access pass for each student to use at any Indiana State Park.

Learn about all of these at [stateparks.IN.gov](http://stateparks.IN.gov) or at [facebook.com/INdnrstateparksandreservoirs](https://facebook.com/INdnrstateparksandreservoirs).

**Other Questions?** Email us at [INParkForestFees@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:INParkForestFees@dnr.IN.gov)